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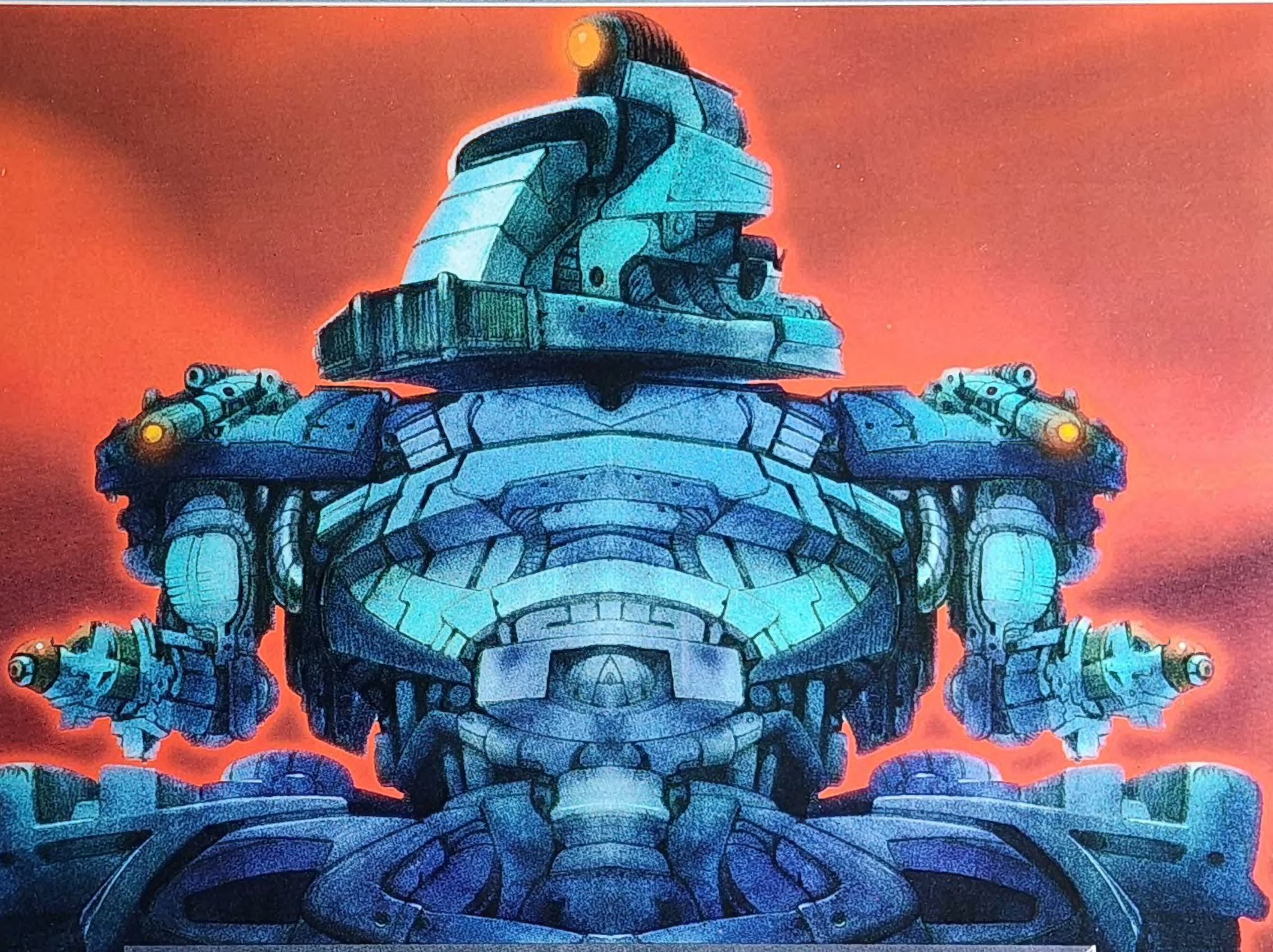
The Ancestral Trail

CYBER CHALLENGE IN THE NEXT DIMENSION



39

Proton, Power Android

Tank battle on the cyber plains

Julek Heller

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In the thirty-ninth sector

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Computer graphics produced by Mehau Kulyk

Deep despair was etched into Richard's face as he fought in vain to stop the doors from slamming shut. At the same time, he struggled to escape the bite of the poison-tipped spikes that were emerging from the walls of the corridor and threatening to pierce his body armour.

"Robo!" he called feebly as the exit finally closed completely and the bright allure of daylight was replaced with sombre blackness. Was this how his quest was to end? Lying flat on his stomach with the life being squeezed out of him?

Suddenly, a loud roar dragged him away from his thoughts. It was now so cramped that he found it almost impossible to move his head, but this did not stop him from trying to seek out the source of the noise.

Light of freedom

Without warning, a crack appeared in the metal doors that held him captive. To Richard's amazement, a tiny pin-prick of light began to shine directly into his face. It was followed by another, as a second crack appeared. All at once, there was an even louder roar and an explosion of white light. Richard squinted and realized what had happened: he was free.

Staggering to his feet, Richard emerged from the shattered remnants of the doorway to the Galactic Zoo. It was several moments before he came to his senses and began to piece together the chain of events that had led to his freedom.

Cyber Tank

Looking around him, Richard was left in no doubt as to what had smashed the hole in the doorway. Parked imposingly on a landscape that had the pallor of polished stone was an enormous tank. It was very similar to the tanks that Richard had seen in books and on television, and yet something told him that it quite obviously belonged to the Cyber Dimension.

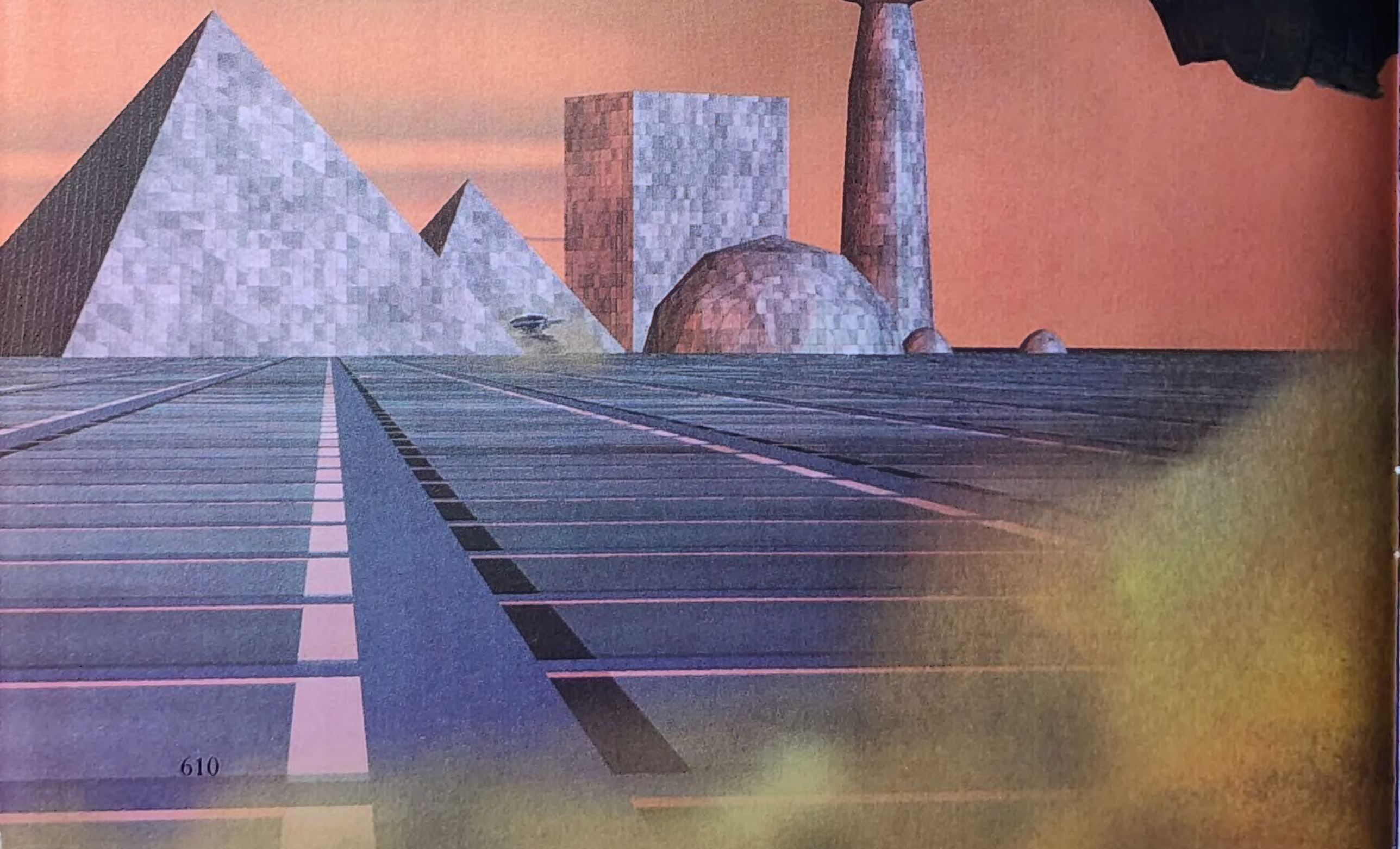
Metallic green in colour, and with a gun turret that was as thick as the proudest oak, the machine simply oozed power. Whilst Richard had never before seen the like of such an awesome creation, he had no trouble in recognizing its pilot. Sitting serenely within the tank's cockpit and waving happily at him was the squat figure of Robo.

Richard had many questions to ask his robotic friend but before he could speak, Robo cut in. "Chosen One must enter sanctuary of cyber tank. Sensors indicate nearby presence of Omni piece."

Richard curtailed his questioning and quickly climbed aboard the cyber tank. Before he did so, he had the chance to steal a quick glance around and take in the new terrain in which he found himself.

As he had noticed previously, the ground was very shiny. It reminded Richard of what the floor of his mother's kitchen sometimes looked like after it had been scrubbed and polished.

In the distance, he could see several pyramids. Next to these was a strange construction shaped like a giant ball. Behind that was a square building. By far the most impressive feature of the



collection of structures was the sharply-pointed tower that reached upwards to impale the crimson-drenched heavens. Something told Richard it was here he would find the Omni piece Robo had mentioned.

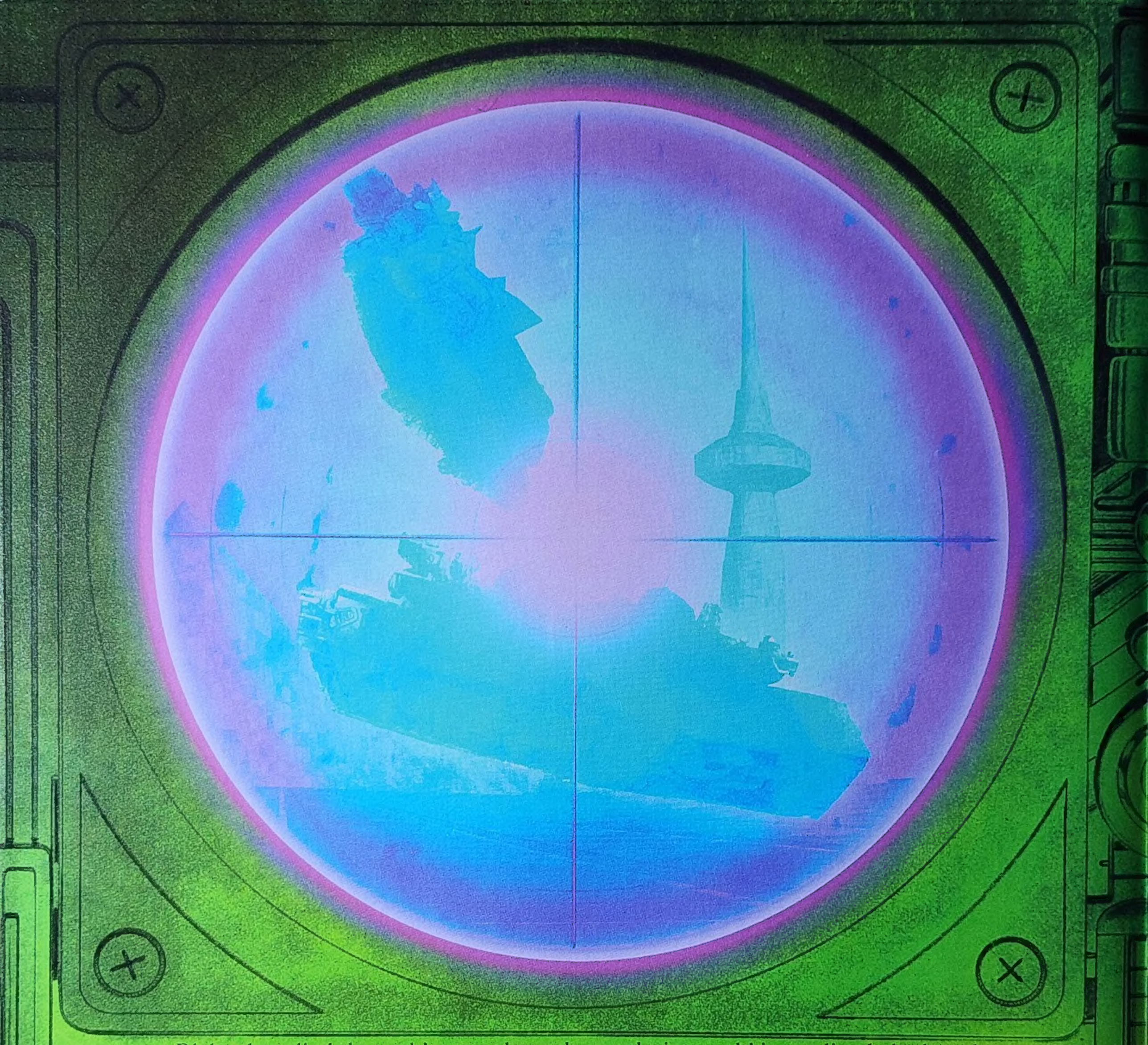
The sight of the pyramids and the tower worried Richard. The last time he had encountered a pyramid it had contained the evil Identico. Likewise, his climb to the top of the Lost Tower had freed the gargoyles and almost cost him his life.

"Oh well," he said to Robo as he settled into the cockpit of the tank, "I suppose I've got no choice but to head for those buildings over there?"

"Affirmative," came Robo's familiar response. "Omni piece located in tower."

There was a loud clang as Robo slammed the top hatch of the cyber tank shut. The pair were now completely shut off from the outside world. Richard scanned the tank's controls and was surprised to find that they were very familiar. "They're almost exactly the same as the cyber cruiser's," he pronounced.

In moments, Richard had worked out how to start the vehicle. There was a rumble as the tank began to move forward. Gaining in confidence, he steered it towards the group of buildings. "This is much better than walking!" he exclaimed.



Richard studied the tank's control panel. It contained a circular viewing screen which gave a clear picture of the landscape outside. A range of different coloured buttons controlled features such as cockpit temperature, internal lighting and braking.

Accidental launch

There was also a joystick, which was surprisingly sensitive. Even the lightest touch was enough to make the machine change direction. On the top edge of the joystick was a small red button. Richard depressed it and the sound of an enormous explosion could immediately be heard. The noise almost made Richard jump out of his skin.

"What happened?" he gasped.

"Chosen One has launched guided missile," was the reply.

"Oops!" said Richard guiltily, looking at the viewing screen to see that a large crater had appeared on the landscape.

"Sound has alerted other cyber tanks," Robo proclaimed with a note of urgency.

Sure enough, as Richard continued to stare at the screen, he noticed three small dots appear on the horizon. Within

moments, they had grown large enough for him to identify them as cyber tanks.

"Are they friendly?" he asked.

"Negative. Chosen One must attack."

Richard felt sweat trickle down his face as he pressed the red button for a second time. Instantly, one of the newly-arrived cyber tanks erupted into a ball of fire. The ground shook as Richard fired off two more guided missiles.

"Well, that wasn't too difficult," Richard said, looking with interest at the smoking relics of the three tanks.

"Negative," Robo once more said. "Arrival of Proton imminent."

A new shape appeared on the viewing screen. It was huge.

Richard swerved the tank around to face the newcomer. As it drew closer, he could see that, apart from its vast size, it closely resembled the other tanks.

"Is that Proton?" Richard asked Robo.

"Affirmative."

Unprovoked Attack

Richard prepared to launch another missile in the direction of the metallic form but something stopped him.

"Perhaps," he considered aloud, "if I don't provoke Proton, it will not attack."

It did not take long for the foolishness of this notion to become violently apparent.

Without warning, a laser beam jetted out from Proton. It struck the cyber tank, buffeting it from side to side.

Richard acted swiftly. In the blink of an eye he had fired a volley of missiles at the giant creature. They struck Proton head on and bounced off harmlessly. The machine was too powerful. For all the effect the missiles had, he could have been firing ping-pong balls.

"Suggest Chosen One moves away from proximity of Proton," Robo opined.

"I can see a lot of sense in what you say," Richard responded with grim irony.

With a deft sweep of the joystick, Richard turned the cyber tank around and accelerated away from his assailant. His action proved to be fruitless. Proton was too fast. The creature had no trouble in keeping pace with Richard's retreat.

Suddenly, the cyber tank was once more hit by the laser beam. Richard could smell smoke. "We're on fire!" he yelled.

"Exit cyber tank immediately!" Robo responded, opening the hatch as he did so.

Another laser blast followed the robot's words. The cyber tank began to break up.

With Robo leading the way, Richard hurled himself out of the burning tank. The metallic exterior of the seemingly-invincible fighting machine was glowing white hot as Proton continued to attack. Proton had apparently failed to notice that the object of its assault was now empty. There was a roar as the gigantic apparition applied the finishing touches to its destructive display. Cowering on the floor, his face flushed from the intense heat, Richard watched in awe as the cyber tank was vaporized into nothingness.

"That could have been us in there!" he said.

THE TRANSMUTER

Richard swivelled his head until his eyes fell on Robo's binary panel. As he expected, there was a new message waiting to be decoded. With Proton bearing down on him, Richard knew that he would be unable to do this. Somehow, he needed to buy some time.

While Richard was desperately seeking a solution to his predicament, Proton suddenly stopped moving. Richard's eyes widened in surprise as Proton began to change shape. Gears began to grind as Proton slowly transformed from a cyber tank into a new shape.

"Proton transmuting into power android," observed Robo.

Richard tore his eyes away from the creature and concentrated on the binary message. With a little luck, there was a chance he could finish his work before Proton's transformation was complete.

Richard had just about worked out the message when an ominous growl came from Proton. Its transformation was over. Instead of a cyber tank, Richard found himself looking at an enormous humanoid robot. In the place of legs, it had retained its caterpillar tracks. It had two mighty arms that looked as if they could tear Richard in half. In the middle of what Richard assumed was its head was a single, luminous eye.

"That must be its weakness," Richard said, "but how am I going to reach it?"

As Proton slowly turned to face him, Richard knew what he had to do. To get within striking distance of its eye he was going to have to climb up the android's body. "Here goes!" he cried.

Richard moved fast. With Robo looking on, he headed straight towards the giant monster. The ploy momentarily confused Proton. Before the android had time to attack, Richard had already scaled the lower half of its body and was standing on the small platform that supported its upper torso. More deadly laser beams rifled through the air as the android attempted to rid itself of the annoying attentions of Richard.

With a cry of triumph, Richard reached the eye. From close up it appeared to be made from some kind of crystalline substance. It glittered as if it were alive.

Richard drew his sword and thrust it directly into the eye. With a twist of his wrist, the wires that held the glowing orb in place were severed. Like a nut falling from the branches of a tree, Proton's eye dropped to the floor with a hollow clatter.

Blind panic

Proton issued a deafening bellow of rage that made the ground quake. It was the first show of emotion the creature had made. Richard clung on to the android for dear life as a mixture of sheer panic and blind rage compelled Proton to spin uncontrollably. Waving its mechanical arms wildly, Proton began to fire its laser beam haphazardly in all directions, almost hitting the watching Robo.

Taking great care, Richard began to climb down from the rampaging creature. Several times he was almost caught by one of Proton's flailing arms. Finally, he hopped to the ground and ran towards his robotic companion.

"Let's go!" he called to Robo.

For once the robot did not reply. Instead, he scampered after Richard and away from the still dangerous android. As they ran, a series of explosions could be heard rocking the landscape.

When Richard and Robo had moved far enough away from Proton, they turned to watch their powerful adversary. They still needed to be careful. The android's deadly laser beams were cascading over the landscape like searchlights after an escaped prisoner.

All at once, Proton's cries of anger were replaced by a mournful bellow of pain. Unable to see where it was aiming its laser beams, the android had somehow managed to shoot itself. The lower part of its torso was alight. Black smoke and orange flames belched out into the reddened skies.

End of the power android

Within moments, the flames had spread all over the android's body. The smell of burning rubber and metal filled the air.

"Look! It's blowing up!" cried Richard.

As the words left his lips a series of savage explosions reverberated throughout the strange, polished landscape. "How did it happen?"he added.

"Proton, power android, has shot itself in the foot," Robo replied.

As Robo looked at him in puzzlement, Richard could not help laughing at the robot's accidental witticism.

There was a final, almighty explosion as Proton finally disintegrated. Fragments of molten metal careered dangerously past the watching pair.

"Wow!" was all that Richard could say.

It was left to Robo to turn his mind back to the job on hand. "Chosen One must head for tower to locate Omni piece."

The tower was still a fair way in the distance. Having no means of transport, Richard and his companion set off on foot. "By the way, " Richard said thoughtfully, "I never did ask you how you managed to find the cyber tank."

Robo thought for a moment. "Robo borrowed cyber tank," was his response.

After walking for ages, Richard and Robo eventually arrived at the entrance to the tower. From close up, the building was enormous. It looked much bigger than Richard had imagined. An arched doorway revealed nothing but darkness inside.

"We shouldn't go in there yet," Richard said nervously. "It seems too quiet – I don't like it."

Beside him, Robo switched on his sensors and scanned the immediate surroundings. After a few moments, he spoke. "Tower is deserted," he declared. "No danger in immediate vicinity."

Into the tower

"I'm not doubting what you say," Richard replied. "It's just that I've a feeling we're heading into a trap."

"Sensors indicate that tower is deserted," Robo repeated.

"Oh well," Richard shrugged. "Let's go inside, then."

Richard's footsteps echoed as he entered the building and started to ascend a flight of steps which led to top of the tower. "It's cold in here!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands together to warm them.

When the climb was over, Richard and Robo found themselves standing in a large chamber that was illuminated by an eerie blue glow. Set in one of its sombre, smooth walls was a heavily decorated doorway. "Is the Omni piece in there?" Richard asked, his breath freezing in the cold air.

The Robot's internal processors once again whirred into action. "Affirmative," Robo replied. "Door must be opened to obtain Omni piece."

Richard looked for a door handle but could find none. He ran his fingers over the door's surface. "It's like a Chinese puzzle," he proclaimed.

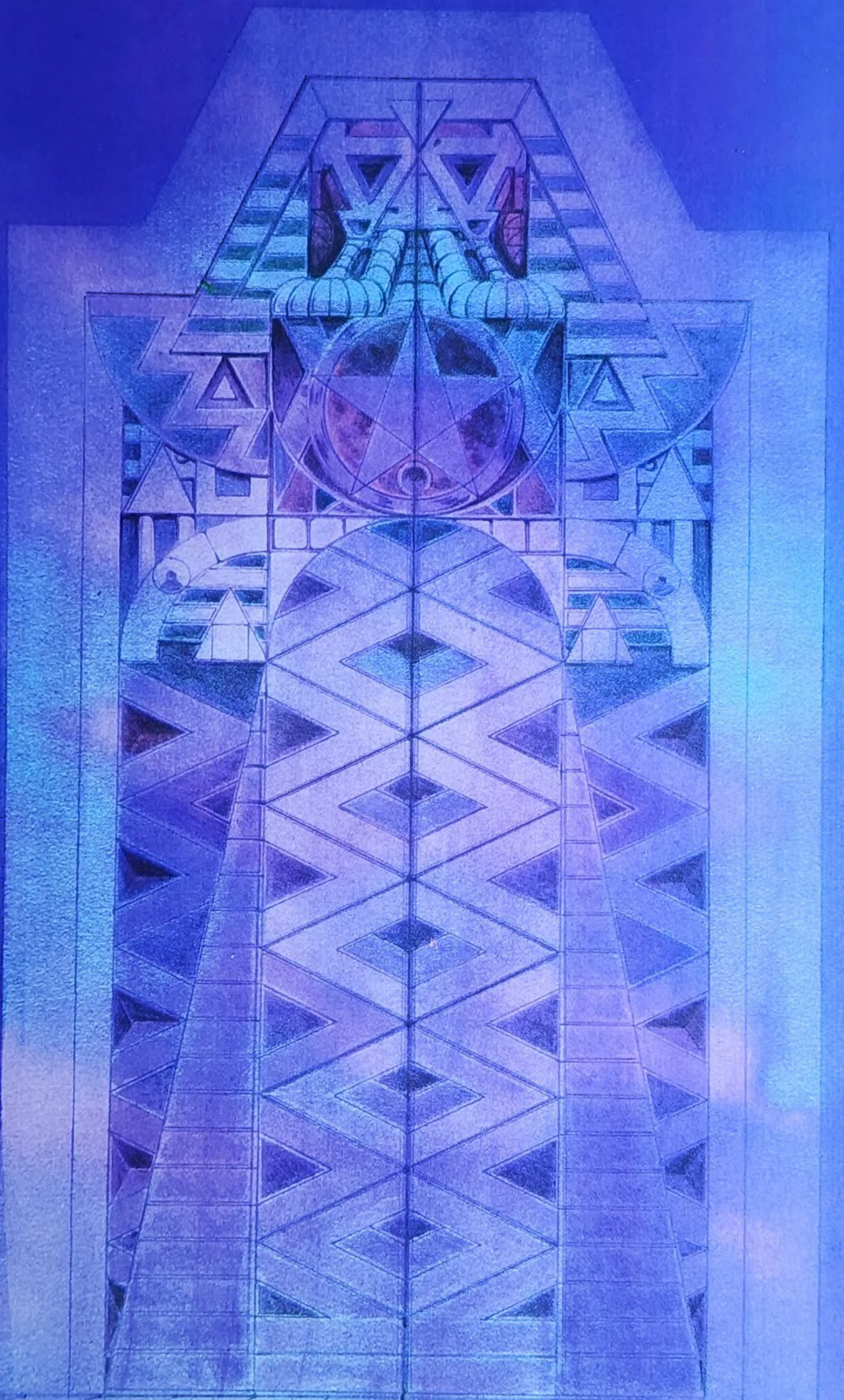
Impossible puzzle

After pushing, pulling, tugging and yanking until he was exhausted, Richard began to lose his temper. There seemed to be no way to open the door. "Robo, use your heat ray," he commanded.

A concentrated burst of heat came from the robot. It struck the door with full force but had no effect other than to drain Robo's batteries.

After what seemed an age, Robo was forced to give up. "Heat ray not strong enough to open door," he said.

"What are we going to do?" Richard grimaced. "I don't like this place at all. I want to leave – I'm freezing!"



Steadily running out of ideas, Richard sat down to think. Suddenly, the door opened! Richard leapt to his feet in excitement. "I don't know how," he exclaimed, "but it's open. Let's get that Omni piece."

As the words left his lips the doors swung shut. Richard frowned. Then he realized what had happened.

"Robo," he cried, "I think I know how it works!" Smiling, he sat down again and immediately the door opened. "I'm sitting on a secret panel," he said. "It's invisible – I found it by sheer chance."

Lift off

Richard remained sitting on the floor as the robot entered the opening and found the triangular Omni piece. It was quickly placed next to the the other two pieces in Robo's side panel. Richard stood up to join his companion. As he did so, an ominous rumbling sound could be heard.

Before Richard could do anything he was thrown to the ground. "What's happening!" he yelled as the sound grew louder.

"Removing Omni piece has activated rocket," Robo answered. "Tower is taking off into space."

Richard felt invisible forces pin him to the floor.

SHOOMI'S SANCTUARY

Enter into the Cyber Dimension and engage optical recognition to find...

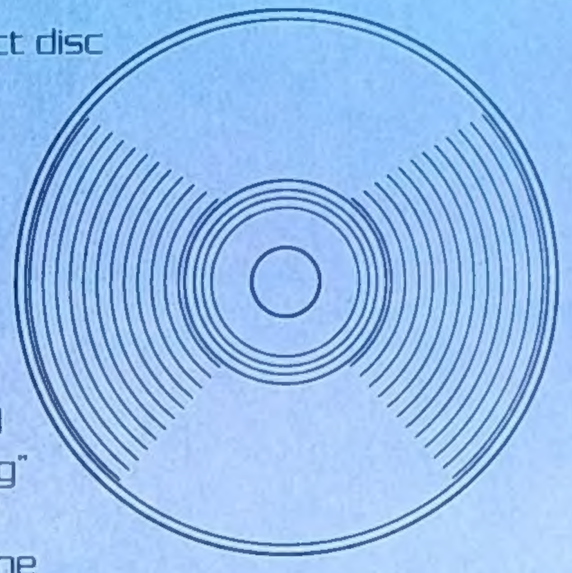
▶ Shoomi and Shoobi

Richard and Robo's faithful followers are still on the trail of our heroes. Carefully study the illustrations in this issue and see if you can locate Shoomi and Shoobi in under three minutes.

In issue 38 Shoomi and Shoobi were on page 603.

▶ Computer Challenge

Hidden somewhere in this issue is a vitally important computer component from the sinister Cyber Dimension. Use your visual skills to help Richard and his friend Robo locate it in less than three minutes.
When you have discovered the component's hiding place, can you guess what it is and what its function might be?



In issue 38 a compact disc (CD) was hidden on page 606. Compact discs are storage devices that can contain digital sounds, pictures or computer data. Information is stored on the CD by "etching" it into a thin layer of metal with a laser. The metal is then placed under a protective coating of transparent plastic that completely covers the CD. The resulting "pits" can by read by a CD player.

▶ Competition Details

When you have collected 26 letter blocks, you will be given a clue which will help you form them into a sentence that reveals the fatal flaw in the Cyber Dimension. The prize for the competition is a super Sega Mega Drive, complete with a copy of the great new role-playing game Shining Force.
Details on how to enter the competition will be given in a later issue.
NB The competition will be open to residents of the UK and Eire only.

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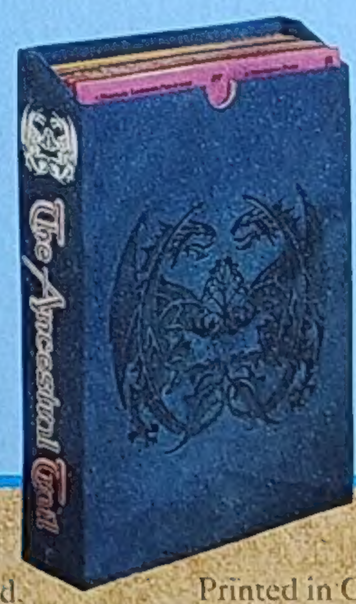

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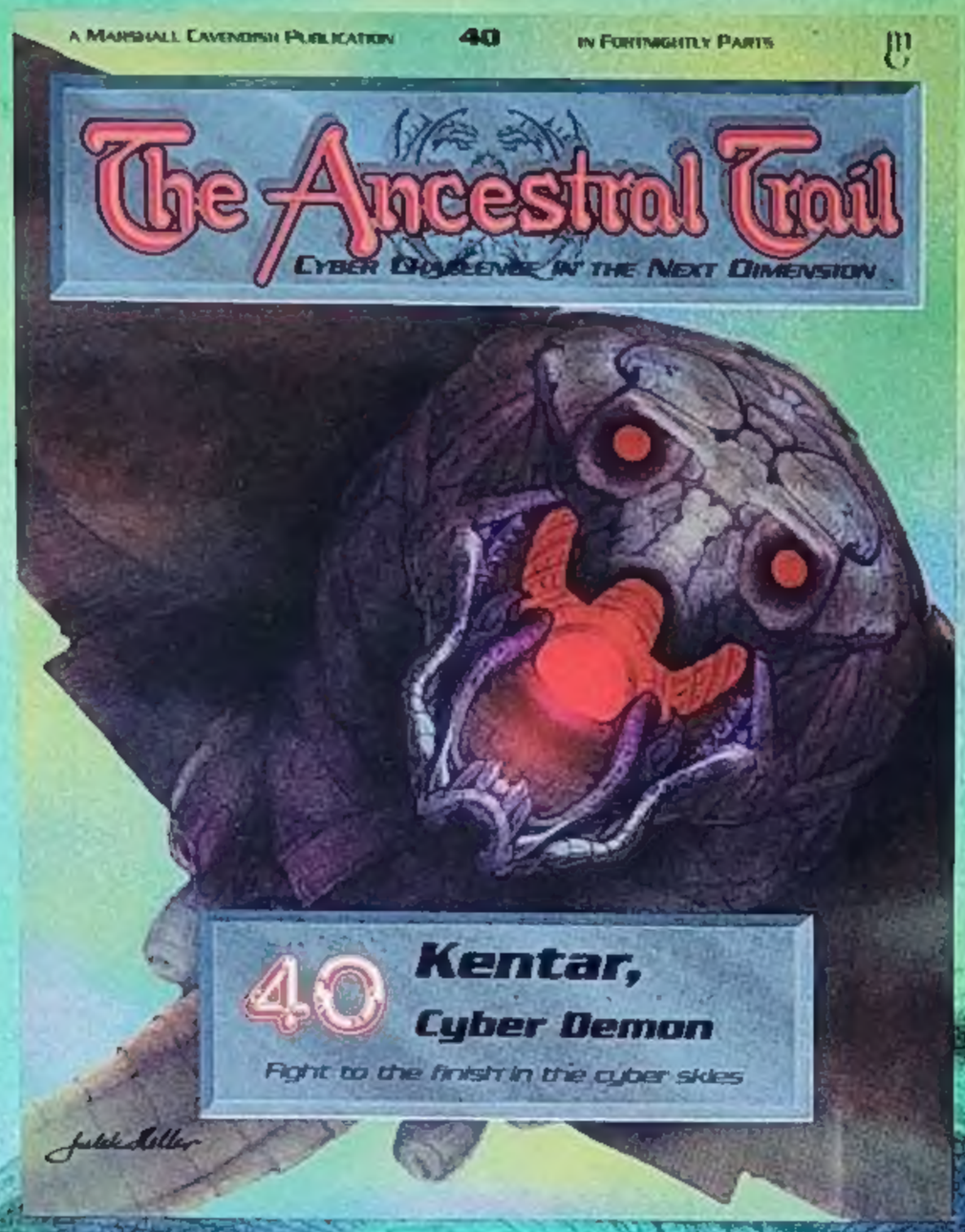

In Issue 40

Kentar,
Cyber Demon

Richard and Robo are lost in a city of clouds. Then they are swallowed by a gigantic robot sea serpent. Is this the end of their adventures?

plus

- Second piece of your **Cyber Chess** and **Mainframe Control** playing boards

Coming in Issue 41

Continuuma, Empress of Time

Richard is captured by an android with the ability to control time. Will he survive the hall of cyber dreams?

plus

2 more **Techscan** cards ▶ More **Cyber Power** cards ▶ More **Cyber Chess** playing pieces.

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